

REPORT ON VISIT TO CUBA

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The First Presidency
47 East South Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah

July 23, 1947

Dear Brethren:

Submitted herewith is the report on visit to Cuba made for the purpose of studying the conditions with a view of doing missionary work in that country:

THE PROBLEM

The determining factors, as I analyzed the Cuban situation as to whether missionary work should be carried on among this people, are: (1) the number of pure white (Spanish) blood on the island (2) is the trend toward the preservation of this pure white blood (3) will there be an increase in the pure white blood (4) would an injection of our doctrine into the Cuban situation of no racial discrimination be wise (5) should the gospel be taught to the negro.

The major portion of my investigation was to obtain reliable answers to these questions.

The following charts, government records, information from authorities gives the result of the study.

cc Cuba 10

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1943 Official Government Census

Mr. Franklin - American Embassy

Dr. Domingo Roman y Jaime, International Representative of the Boy Scouts of Cuba, a Lawyer

Dr. Ortelio Martines - Fortan, Head of the Department of Sociology - University of Cuba - Director of Finlay Institute, which is an endowed institution to carry out a scientific study of vital statistics.

Chester W. Young - Federal Security Agency, U.S. Public Health Service. He is now in Cuba making a study of vital statistics.

Dr. Lowery Nelson - University of Wisconsin. Spent two years in Cuba studying rural population. He is a member of the Church.

"Problems of New Cuba" - Raymond Leslie Buell, Frank Whitson Fetter, Frank Dunston Graham.

"Cuba and the United States" - Russell H. Fitzgibbon, Ph.D.

"A History of the Cuban Republic" - C. E. Chapman.

STATISTICAL

Date of visit, May 12 to May 16, 1947

Cuba is 1:45 minutes by plane from Miami, Florida and 12 hours by boat.

Area - 44,164 square miles

Population - 1943 Census - 4,778,583

Population 1947 Estimated - 5,051,850

Showing increase in Population since 1879.

1879	1,631,687
1899	1,572,797
1907	2,048,980
1919	2,889,004
1931	3,962,344
1943	4,778,583

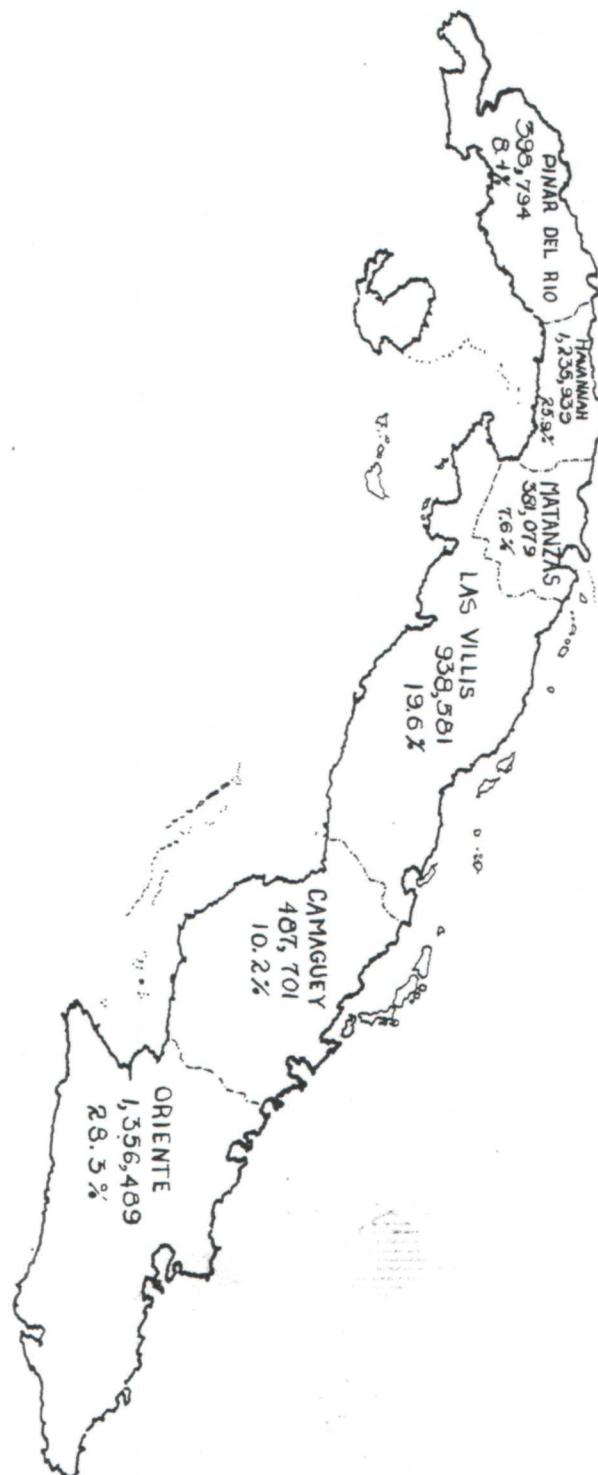
1931 Census showed 2,185,991 whites;
1,105,288 negroes.

1943 Census gives 74.1% white;
25.9% negro.

Six cities over 100,000 Population

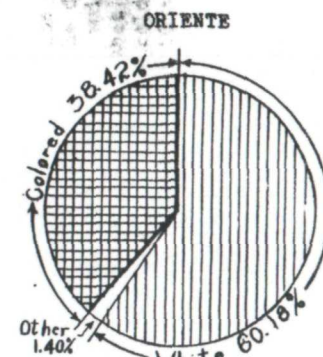
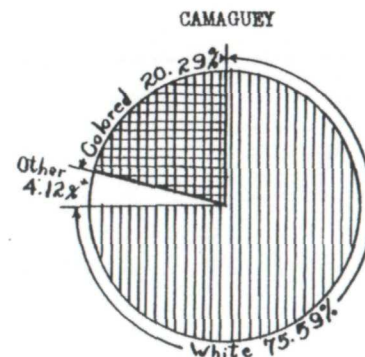
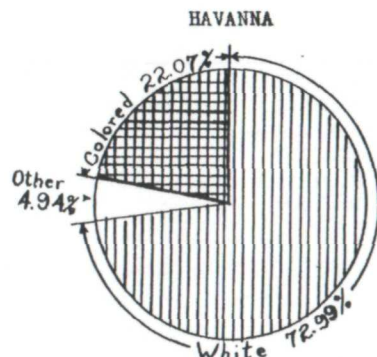
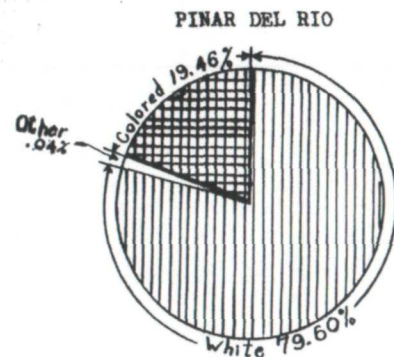
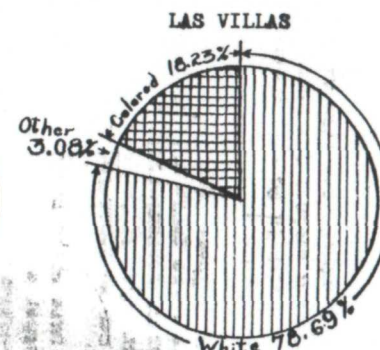
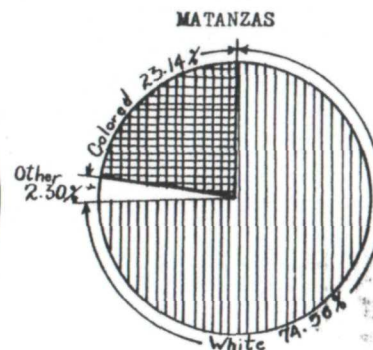
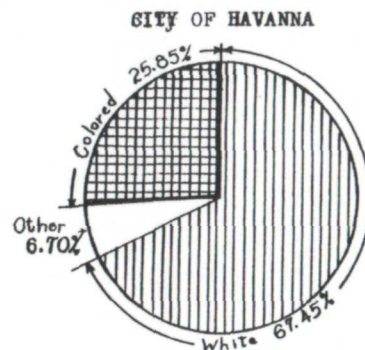
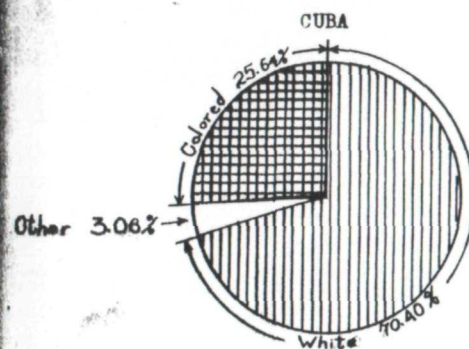
Havana	676,370	La Habana Province
Melena Del Sur	135,813	
Sancti-Spiritus	104,578	Los Villas Province
Santa Clara	122,241	
Camaguey	135,827	Camaguey Province
Holquin	171,997	Oriente Province
Santiago De Cuba	120,577	

MAP OF CUBA
 Showing
 PROVINCES, POPULATION PER PROVINCE
 and
 PER CENTAGE OF POPULATION PER PROVINCE



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POPULATION GRAPH SHOWING PER CENT
OF WHITE AND COLORED AND FOREIGNER'S
IN CUBA, CITY OF HAVANNA AND PROVINCES



THE WHITE ELEMENT

The above charts and figures obtained from 1943 records indicate 3,412,242 whites and 1,165,214 colored.

These figures are misleading in the actual number of people who have colored blood. The Census Taker asks the question, white or colored, and accepts the answer given. Many mulattoes answer, white. It is a general practice if they are less than 50% colored, they are classified white.

It was the consensus of opinion of the authorities with whom we discussed this situation that there are, in Cuba at the present time, approximately one million of pure white blood.

This is as accurate and reliable estimation as could be obtained from authoritative and expert sources.

This group is made up largely of the professional and business class in urban centers.

According to Dr. Nelson there is a predominancy of whites in the rural districts.

From these same reliable and authoritative sources and from our observation this group in the urban sections is maintaining a strict segregation from the colored race. Professional, business, and some civic clubs, whose membership comes from the above group do not permit membership to anyone with colored blood.

We visited at these clubs as the guests of Dr. Romeu y Jaime, and we observed no one who possessed any of the colored characteristics. We were advised that genealogies were carefully checked of all members.

Dr. Fortan related this incident in his own family which illustrates how carefully these groups are guarding the purity of their blood. His daughter became interested in a young man from one of the southern provinces who was attending the University of Cuba. Dr. Fortan made a special trip to the boy's home town some 500 miles to check his genealogy. He discovered that one of the boy's uncles was of Negro blood. This ended the courtship.

There is, no doubt, some of the blood of Israel among the Cubans. Dr. Fortan, who in my opinion, was the outstanding personality we met in Cuba is the son of an Englishman. His father was a practicing physician in Cuba, his mother a Spanish woman of pure white blood.

It was the unanimous opinion of the men we contacted that the lines of race discrimination will be drawn more sharply in the future, and on a broader base between this white group of approximately one million and the colored element. Also, that the pure white group will increase in proportionate numbers over the colored group. There is a definite trend in this direction at the present time.

I am aware that we are doing missionary work in South American countries where there is little or no discrimination against the negro. There we are successfully teaching the gospel to groups free from negro blood.

The situation in Cuba differs from these countries in that the population is very concentrated and the people of negro blood are predominate in numbers and have a higher social status and are more active in government affairs. This makes the problem more acute in Cuba. That is the problem of doing missionary work among the white element. It creates rather a delicate situation in making our appeal only to the whites.

In my opinion, our opportunity is to work among the approximately one million whites. This would of necessity be our only approach and our work limited to this group. This would necessitate sending missionaries with a fine educational background who could meet and present the gospel to the professional and business groups of the white race. I feel there is an intelligent approach to the problem and if the situation is handled with some finesse and diplomacy, missionary work may be successful in Cuba.

The Cuban people are very friendly and hospitable. The groups I contacted, I found to be people of culture, refinement, with a very high regard for the Christian virtues. They are very liberal minded even in the field of religion.

I discussed with them the program of the Church. Their response was very favorable. They expressed the opinion that such a program would meet a very definite need among their people. This group is found in the urban communities.

There is a wide variance in the estimates as to the number of Americans in Cuba. The government records gave approximately 11,000 registered. Some of our contacts placed the number as high as 50,000. Dr. Fortan and Mr. Young gave this figure.

The native Indian of the island is extinct. Under Spanish rule they were annihilated. There are a few Haitian Indians on the southern part of the island brought in as laborers.

There are a few Chinese scattered here and there at their usual occupations in urban and rural sections.

As a general practice there is no race discrimination in Cuba. In the middle and lower groups inter-marriage is the common practice. They socialize on a common basis of complete equality. However, the negroes are not assuming general leadership in politics, professions, or managerial positions in industry and business. The 1943 Census shows 99,217 in the professions - 50,168 white, 7,057 negro. It was reported to us the Bitesio former President of Cuba was part negro. The present head of the Communist party in Cuba is a negro. We were informed that Communism is unpopular among the Cubans. The Catholic Church may be responsible for this attitude toward Communism. Labor unions are of little consequence.

The government is stable. That is in a broad sense, that the present republican form of government will continue. The officials are corrupt and the government very inefficiently managed. Our observations as we visited many of the government offices revealed this. All government offices close at one o'clock each day. When the offices are open most of the desks are vacant with the employees loitering here and there in groups.

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We were advised that if a public official was prompt in keeping an appointment that he was not considered a good public servant because this evidenced he was not busy.

At all the government offices we were treated with much courtesy and friendliness. But in the conduct of their public affairs they are Latins and they still dispose of their political enemies in the best Latin fashion.

The government is democratic in name only. Only a small percentage of the people interest themselves in government. This is true among the professional and business men. The government is completely in the hands of corrupt professional politicians. Even court decisions are purchased.

Several Protestant churches are doing active missionary work in Cuba. Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians have churches in the principal cities. Their activities are confined largely to the urban centers. They maintain schools and hospitals. The Baptists are perhaps the most active. Their latest report follows: 121 Missionaries. Six of these Missionaries are American, the others are Cuban; 64 Churches, 152 Sunday Schools with an enrollment of 7,349; total membership 5,771; baptized last year 331.

Their most effective missionary work is done by native Cubans.

The native Cuban members contributed last year, \$38,897.68 to the Baptist Church.

They proselyte among the negroes. No discrimination is shown.

Catholicism is the dominant religion, but they do not take the Catholic Church too seriously. I quote from Dr. Nelson: "In reference to Catholicism, while the Cubans are nominally Roman Catholic, they take the religion rather lightly. Wherever I went, I asked rural people about the church and invariably they told me that they saw the priest only once a year, when he came around to baptize the babies at \$3.00 per head; like branding the calves at the annual roundup. Some families have crucifixes and other paraphernalia in their homes and carry on something of the ancient ritual, but my impression is that it means little to most of them."

The public school system is patterned after our own. The University of Cuba is the center of higher learning. High schools and grade schools are very inadequate even in the urban centers. There are only two high schools (public) in the city of Havana with over a million population.

The small rural communities gave evidence of poverty. They are completely without social activities. The ox teams are in evidence on the farms and the highways. On the farms the laborers are housed in thatched roof huts. Here and there beautiful homes of the land owners are seen.

Havana the capital city has a million inhabitants. The new section of the city is beautiful - wide boulevards, center parked, lovely gardens and landscaping about the fine modernistic homes. The apartment houses and business buildings are more modernistic in architectural design than we see in our American cities. The old part of the city is like a picture book of old Spain.

Cuba is becoming Americanized. All Cuban life is influenced more by America than any other nation. Their government is patterned after the United States, also their schools. They do more business with American business concerns than any other people. Their educational and professional leaders are educated in American schools. Many American business concerns are in Cuba. To read the billboards you would think you were in an American city. In every store and restaurant they have someone who speaks English.

Cuba is a playground for Americans. Many Cubans visit in America.

Many of their young people attend high schools in the United States. We met Dr. Jaime's seventeen-year old daughter just back from New York where she is a high school student.

There are at present over fifty Cubans registered at Georgia Tech, located in Atlanta.

THE NEGRO PROBLEM

The negro situation in Cuba presents a problem. There is no race discrimination other than social with groups as previously stated. They mingle together freely in all social, business and political activities. They have intermarried freely. There are not available accurate records to determine who has negro blood among the average Cuban. As previously stated, there are approximately one million of the total population that are free from negro blood. The future will see an increase in this group in proportion to total population.

The problem is different than in the South. Here we do not proselyte among the negroes because of race discrimination. The Elders could not socialize with them even to conducting meetings because of public sentiment. The negro convert cannot attend white meetings for the same reason. They cannot carry on Church activities among themselves because they cannot hold the Priesthood.

In Cuba there would be no such barriers in proselyting among the negroes. The whites and colored would attend the same meetings. They would socialize in all their religious activities. The Elders could preside over them and socialize with them.

Here the question arises, and this, it seems to me, is all important: what will be the negro's reaction, in a country where there is no race discrimination, to the doctrine that he cannot hold the Priesthood and thus be denied executive leadership in the Church, while his Spanish neighbor may enjoy such a privilege. Would injecting this doctrine into this Cuban situation cause repercussions that may bring the Church in disrespect in that country? May there not be political reaction against such a missionary effort?

Mr. Franklin of the American Embassy said that our own government would look with disfavor upon any form of race discrimination. I quote from Dr. Nelson: "I would dislike to see it (the Church) enter Cuba or any other island where different races live and establish missionary work. The white and colored people get along much better in the Caribbean and most of Latin-America than they do in the United States. Prejudice exists, there is no doubt, and the whites in many ways manifest their feelings of superiority, but there is much less of it than one finds in U. S. A., especially in our South. For us to go into a situation like that and preach a doctrine of "white supremacy" would, it seems to me, be a tragic disservice."

The Doctor seems to have no fear as to any unfavorable reaction against the Church but he feels it would be unfortunate to disturb their present condition of race equality.

We may well ask ourselves the question, would it be a tragedy to teach them the truth. Would it be a disfavor to teach them racial purity? Would not the negro be a happier race if they knew their racial status and enjoyed the blessings of membership in the Church, its purifying influence in their lives - without holding the Priesthood - than in their present tragic plight in the world. Has not the gospel helped the American Negro who accepted of it? In my opinion many of the negroes would accept the gospel and be happy in the church.

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Again here are five million people - are they entitled to hear the gospel? Should we boldly declare the truth to them and await the result? Is the negro entitled to have the gospel preached to him? Many of them have accepted the gospel. Are they entitled to know their true relationship to God and their status in His Kingdom? We may also ask ourselves the question, are other people entitled to this knowledge? The cursed negro blood would not be in their veins had they known the truth. What of these one million whites, are they entitled to the gospel?

It may seem unwise to inject the program of the Church and its philosophy into the Cuban situation, yet, are we justified in anticipating the reactions of these people and remaining out of Cuba? It indeed would seem an unwise thing for Joseph Smith to confront a Christian nation with the declaration that all their churches were apostate and not acceptable to the Lord. Jonah argued himself out of going to Ninevah because it seemed to him to be a very undiplomatic thing to do, to go into the capital city of the most powerful nation on the face of the earth, and tell them of their sins. Amos went to Bethel. Paul went to Rome.

The program of the Church is needed among the Cubans - urban as well as rural. Based on my observations it would be well received. I discussed this point at some length with both Dr. Porten and Jaime. The youth program and activities of our other organizations appealed to them and they recognized a great need for such organizations among their people. Neither the churches, governments, or schools are doing anything for the people in the field of recreation, and culture, or in giving them a vital, active religious life. The churches provide little in these fields either in the community or their individual lives.

I quote from Dr. Nelson: "There is a great service to be rendered rural Cubans if the right approach were made. Mormonism is well adapted to render such service with its system of lay leadership and many activity programs. Many rural Cubans have nothing in the way of organized social life. To them, the family is the basic institution and beyond it, the neighborhood. Our Church would provide them with something very sorely needed. It would develop leadership among them, provide them with hope and aspiration, give them a feeling of importance as individuals which they have never had. They have been exploited by priest and politician; they have been led to believe that the government is not any of their responsibility and that the Church is the business of the priest and the bishop. While there is a great deal of individualism among them, they have definite and discernible feelings of inferiority when it comes to matters of leadership."

They need a vital religion. The social, recreational, and cultural activities of the Church would be warmly received by the people.

WHY WE SHOULD STAY OUT OF CUBA

Unfavorable Factors

1. Possible reactions against the Church in introducing a doctrine of "race superiority" into an existing condition of race equality. The reaction may come (a) from government (b) from Negro leaders (c) entire mulatto element (d) general public (e) our own government officials in Cuba.
2. Difficulty of determining the negro blood in large part of the population. Co-mingling of the races has been going on for many years. No adequate records kept by which color can be determined.
3. The sins of the people (mixing white and colored blood through marriage) have denied them the blessings of the gospel.
4. They are of Latin blood and if opposition arose, local or general, it would be swift, intense and ruthless.

WHY WE SHOULD GO INTO CUBA

Favorable Factors

1. It is the commission to the Church to preach the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.
2. There are at least one million people on the island who are preserving their racial purity, that are entitled to all the blessings of the gospel.
3. There is a great need for the gospel - the program of the Church - among the white people.
4. The white element would be responsive to the program of the Church.
5. With the right approach certain negro elements may respond to the gospel. They have in America.
6. Cuba's nearness to America and an organized Mission would make a trial missionary effort feasible.
7. The responsibility for the gospel not going to the five million Cuban people should be upon their own souls not ours.

CONCLUSION

I have endeavored to give you such information, without burdening you with too much detail, and make such analysis as would be most helpful to you.

I believe I am fully cognizant of the unfavorable factors in doing missionary work among the Cuban people. There is danger of very strong reactions against our doctrine.

But I cannot bring myself to recommend - after days of prayerful consideration that we stay out of Cuba. I cannot overcome the feeling that these people are entitled to the truth.

I believe there is an intelligent approach to the problem that would bring success to our missionary efforts.

I also believe we would be doing a great service to that nation, politically, socially, and spiritually, to put in their hands the Light of the Everlasting Gospel.

I am fully aware that you are entitled to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making the decision. Whatever the Lord directs, we know will be right.

Faithfully your brother,

Heber Weeks
Mission President

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